



## ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Felecia A. Rotellini  
Superintendent of Financial Institutions

Janet Napolitano  
Governor

### **NEWS RELEASE**

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Contact: John P. Hudock  
Public Information Officer  
602-255-4421 ext. 167

### **DFI Removes 12 Individuals from the Financial Services Industry, Initiates Additional Administrative Removal Actions**

Superintendent Felecia Rotellini announced that the Arizona Department of Financial Institutions ("DFI") has, since January 2007, issued 12 final administrative removal orders that remove and prohibit former escrow officers and a loan officer from working within the financial services industry. Two more removal actions were recently filed and several more are in the process of being completed and filed as DFI continues to focus more of its resources on the examination and investigation of mortgage fraud. The administrative removal orders and Notices of Hearing below can be found at: <http://www.azdfi.gov/Final/Intro.htm>.

Chris Bartlemus, a former escrow officer at Security Title Agency, Inc., improperly disbursed \$1,335,190.39 contrary to the provisions of HUD-1 escrow statements or written escrow instructions. He was also indicted by federal authorities in March 2008 on charges of conspiracy, mail fraud, wire fraud, bank fraud, and money laundering.

Margie Lynn Means, who is now a convicted felon, fraudulently diverted \$547,268.40 in escrow funds from Security Title Agency, Inc. to herself and her daughter. She was employed as a branch manager and escrow officer for 21 years at Security Title Agency, Inc.

Annette Marie Damico, a former mortgage payment processor, embezzled \$142,456.72 from Security Title Agency, Inc. where she worked for 18 years. She plead guilty to Theft, a Class 2 Felony.

Sandra J. Flores, a former escrow officer, misappropriated \$18,800 by depositing five checks into her own personal bank account while working at Pioneer Title Agency, Inc. She then misappropriated 20 checks totaling \$32,934.18 while being employed at Transnation Title Insurance Company.

Claudia Denise Ramsey, a former escrow officer at Lawyer's Title of Arizona, Inc., embezzled \$3,250.24 by diverting escrow funds into a company that she managed.

Anna Solis, a former escrow officer at Transnation Title Insurance Company and Camelback Title Agency, L.L.C., was directly involved in a \$48,947.48 defalcation at  
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Transnation, which consisted of 127 forged checks. She also wrongfully disbursed escrow funds involving 47 escrow files while employed at Camelback Title.

Nancy Wilson, a former escrow officer at LandAmerica Financial Group, Inc., misappropriated \$57,385.56 in escrow funds to pay personal credit card accounts.

Francisco Vicente Martinez, a former loan officer at Security Mortgage Corporation, violated Arizona mortgage banker laws by making a misrepresentation in the course of the mortgage banker business. He was also convicted of Forgery, a Class 4 Felony.

Mary Lou Pidd, a former escrow officer at Title Security Agency, Inc. and Ticor Title Agency of Arizona, Inc., used her position as an escrow officer to wrongfully divert \$17,211.78 in escrow funds to her personal bank accounts.

Cine Johnson, a former escrow officer, misappropriated \$30,000 in escrow funds while working at LandAmerica Transnation Title, Inc.

Wendy Kaufmann (formerly know as Wendy Hahn), a former branch manager at Premier Title Agency, L.L.C., wrongfully diverted \$145,525.27 in escrow funds through unauthorized wire transfers. She was also a branch manager at Arizona Title Agency, Inc. where she wrongfully diverted \$21,311.30 by wrongfully handling her own refinance transaction.

Lisa Gorney, a former escrow officer and branch manager at Premier Title Group, diverted and misappropriated escrow funds totaling \$995,952.83. After a joint investigation between the Arizona Attorney General and DFI, she was indicted in March 2008 on charges of theft, fraud, and illegally conducting an enterprise.

On April 24, 2008, DFI filed a Notice of Hearing and Intent to Remove and Prohibit from Further Participation in any Manner in the Conduct of the Affairs of a Financial Institution or Enterprise and Complaint ("removal order") against loan officer, Rick T. McCullough, alleging the following violations of mortgage broker statutes: (1) concealing essential material facts; (2) misrepresenting and making false promises; (3) failing to maintain good standing with the Arizona Corporation; (4) failing to comply with the requirements under RESPA and CCPA; (5) failing to issue and/or maintain a statutorily correct written document agreement; (6) violating DFI's prior Consent Order; and (7) engaging in illegal and improper business practices. On June 23, 2008, a hearing was held at the Office of Administrative Hearings following Mr. McCullough's default. DFI presented evidence along with witnesses' testimony.

On May 13, 2008, DFI filed a removal order against Cindy O. Peterson, a former First American Title Insurance Company escrow officer, alleging that Ms. Peterson wrongfully diverted and disbursed unauthorized escrow funds totaling \$20,124.53. She was also employed as an escrow officer and branch manager at Premier Title Group where DFI alleges Ms. Peterson disbursed unauthorized escrow funds totaling \$2,278 and file discrepancies totaling \$50,485.81.

By law, as a result of a final order, individuals found to be unfit or dishonest, or individuals convicted of a crime involving fraud and deceit may not be employed by any financial institution or enterprise regulated by DFI, without the Superintendent's prior approval.